

NH Veterans Home Celebrates Volunteers



Every Tuesday Carol and Steve Hankard hang out with their heroes.

For just over a year, the Hankards have volunteered in the Life Enhancement Dementia Unit (LEDU) at the New Hampshire Veterans Home. They were both born during World War II and have great respect for veterans; they love listening to the residents' recollections about their service.

"We've heard about bombing missions over Europe, what it was like to be in Pearl Harbor when the Japanese attacked, the flag raising at Iwo Jima, and so much more," Steve says.

Lisa Perry, Volunteer Coordinator for the Veterans Home, sometimes finds it challenging to recruit volunteers to work in LEDU, but the Hankards turned out to be a perfect match. "Some people are afraid of dementia, but Carol and Steve's backgrounds help them understand," Perry explains. "The Hankards jumped right in—they never hesitated."

Carol is a retired nurse and Steve is a retired law enforcement officer. They live in Hebron and drive to the Veterans Home every week to spend time with the residents. "It's unbelievably rewarding," Steve says. "I just wish the general public could know. They'd be beating down the door to volunteer."

Carol and Steve lead an exercise program for the residents called "Move It or Lose It." They also accompany residents to religious services in the

chapel, play bingo, do crossword puzzles, spend one-on-one time with residents, and help out at lunchtime. "It's something we really enjoy doing," Carol says, "and it's especially nice that we can do it together."

The Hankards are pleased to give their time to the Veterans Home. "It's a wonderful place," Steve says, and Carol adds, "We feel like we're part of a family. Everyone here—the nurses, the housekeepers, the recreation staff—all love the residents, and the residents know it. It's a privilege to be involved. We feel like we get much more than we give."

The volunteer program at the New Hampshire Veterans Home offers many opportunities to work in diverse areas. Volunteers staff the Veterans Home store, accompany residents on shopping trips or special excursions off campus, provide special enrichment programs, and participate in recreational activities like Scrabble, dominoes, or bingo. Volunteer coordinator Lisa Perry adds that "When we can match a volunteer's interests with our residents' needs we can usually make everyone happy." NHVH volunteers must be at least twelve years old and go through an informal orientation. Each volunteer is supervised by a staff person. For more information about volunteering, please contact Lisa Perry at (603) 527-4449 or visit the Public Affairs page of the New Hampshire Veterans Home website: www.nh.gov/veterans.

